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**SMITH, COMBEST CALL ADMINISTRATION PLAN TO PAY FOR CROWN BUTTE
EXCHANGE BY DELAYING CRP SIGNUPS "ROBBING PETER TO PAY PAUL"**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – CONGRESSMAN BOB SMITH (R-OR), CHAIRMAN OF THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE TODAY SAID CLINTON ADMINISTRATION PLANS TO PAY FOR A CONTROVERSIAL GIVEAWAY OF \$65 MILLION IN FEDERAL ASSETS BY DELAYING TWO MILLION ACRES FROM ENROLLMENT IN THE CONSERVATION RESERVE PROGRAM (CRP) WAS "WRONG-HEADED AND COMPLETELY UNACCEPTABLE," AND PLEDGED TO FIGHT THE PROPOSAL.

Last fall, during the height of the presidential campaign, President Clinton promised Crown Butte Mines, Inc. \$65 million worth of federal oil, gas, and coal reserves in exchange for the company's promise not to mine an area just outside the northern corner of Yellowstone National Park. However, under the Budget Enforcement Act of 1990, the legislation is required to reduce expenditures by the amount of royalties used for the exchange. Yesterday, the Clinton Administration announced that it proposed to cover the \$65 million by delaying the sign-up of two million acres of cropland under the Conservation Reserve Program.

"It may well be that some of the Administration's campaign promises are coming back to haunt them," Smith said. "But the notion that the Administration would seriously propose to pay for this giveaway on the backs of the Conservation Reserve Program, which Secretary Glickman himself has called the most successful conservation program in history, is simply incredible to me. Taking conservation program funds, supposedly to protect the environment, is the ultimate example of robbing Peter to pay Paul. Farmers have every right to question whether the Clinton Administration understands or cares about their concerns," Smith said.

"I'm very eager to see their legislative proposal, because I can hardly believe that it's serious. It's my understanding that the proposal would require legislative changes in CRP, changes which would conceivably have to come from the Committee on Agriculture. I'm here to tell you that any such proposal would be dead on arrival here," Smith said.

"Just two weeks ago, at our subcommittee hearing, USDA officials said they would enroll CRP acres based on environmental benefits. Now, with signup not even completed, the Clinton Administration is arbitrarily reducing the number of acres we can protect. They want to shift millions of dollars away from cropland protection over to a mining interest. Sounds to me like they got the mine and we got the shaft," Combest said.

Smith represents Oregon's Second Congressional District, which includes most of eastern, southern, and central Oregon. Combest represents Texas' 19th Congressional District, which includes the Panhandle, South Plains, and the Permian Basin.